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From Perrault Through Disney to Fina Torres: Cinderella learns Spanish and Talks Back in *Celestial Clockwork*

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In Fina Torres's 1996 film *Celestial Clockwork* (*Mecánica Celeste*), the character Italo Medici cannot find the perfect singer to play the lead role in his upcoming film version of Rossini's *La Cenerentola.* He reminds both a television audience and his angry producers, who are losing millions with the delay, that the story of Cinderella took centuries to reach us. Therefore, he considers it normal that he should be made to wait for the perfect woman who will play her fairy tale role in his film. Enter Ana Mendoza, a young Venezuelan who left her fiancé at the altar back home and ran away to Paris to pursue her dream of triumphing as an opera singer. After hearing Medici on the radio, Ana sends him a cassette of her interpretation of Rossini. But her rival, Celeste, plots to keep Medici (obviously a reference to an Italian prince) and his Cinderella apart as the traditional search for the foot that fits the glass slipper becomes a search for the woman with the inimitable crystal clear voice.

In a subversive, meta-filmic, intertextual swerve, this recent Hispanic version of Cinderella not only questions the values of the original literary tale by Charles Perrault, but also the similar, more modern tellings that have come down to us through such influential films as Walt Disney's *Cinderella.* Along with Torres's feminist revision of the fairy tale, I shall study three other central elements crucial to our "reading" of *Celestial Clockwork.* First, I shall briefly explore how the fairy tale genre has

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generally been misunderstood as regards its centrality to society's indoctrination of women. Secondly, Torres not only re-writes the Cinderella tale at the level of dialogue, she also parodies and appropriates many of Disney's most memorable visual techniques. Finally, I shall extend my reading of Ana's individual struggle for success in a European context to encompass the general plight of the Latin American artist in the European world of high culture.

I. The Fairy Tale

Celestial Clockwork is easily recognizable as a Cinderella re-write, but before there can be a fruitful discussion of the actual details of the film itself, one must consider the uses and misuses of the fairy tale genre. It is quite common for reviewers to call a film a fairy tale in a dismissive way, especially if it appeals to a female audience. Thus, despite the fact that it won the 1985 Camera d'Or at Cannes, Vincent Canby in the *New York Times* says of Torres's first film *Oriana*, "At it's best, 'Oriane' has the quality of a rather ordinary fairy tale, something that is complete unto itself and has little to do with the real outside world" (77). Canby is mistaken not only about this particular film, but also about the importance and pre-set structures of fairy tales in both the "outside" and artistic worlds.

Jack Zipes points out that the fairy tales we all know today were born when writers who espoused the values of an emerging bourgeois class appropriated folk tale motifs to create a genre that was not only amusing to adults and children alike, but also didactic. Thus writers such as Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and later the Walt Disney Studios offered tales that socialized the young and helped them internalize the values of a male-dominated Christian civil order.[1] There is perhaps no better example of this patriarchal function than the tale of Cinderella which teaches girls that if they are subservient, passive, and silent, a prince will come and solve all their problems. Furthermore, these best-known versions all negate the possibility of female bonding and friendship that had been represented in many folk versions of the story, and in earlier literary versions such as Basile's "La Gatta Cenerentola," and instead reinforce the stereotype of the innocent beauty victimized by the evil villianess. The harmful effects on women of these childhood readings have been thoroughly discussed in two books, which are still popular today, on female psychology, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence* and *The Cinderella Syndrome: Discovering God's Plan When Your Dreams Don't Come True,* that relate

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the problems of real women to the stories of these fictional fairy tale characters.

Yet, the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim assures parents that children need fairy tales because they offer examples of both temporary and permanent solutions to pressing difficulties associated with childhood. Thus when a child sees that Hansel and Gretel do find happiness after being left to starve in the woods, he or she is reassured of the ability to survive tragedy and consequently overcomes the common fears of abandonment, death, rejection, and alienation. Long after readers have outgrown reading (and watching) fairy tales, these stories continue to help internalize recurrent patterns of values and stable expectations about the roles and relationships which are part of their culture. Another famous child psychologist, Arthur Applebee, says of young readers:

> The stories they hear help them to acquire expectations about what the world is like—its vocabulary and syntax as well as its people and places—without the distracting pressure of separating the real from make-belief. And although they will eventually learn that some of this world is only fiction, it is specific characters and specific events which will be rejected; the recurrent patterns of values, the stable expectations about the roles and relationships which are part of their culture, will remain. It is these underlying patterns...which make stories an agent of socialization, one of the many modes by which they are taught the values and standards of their elders. (Hunt 190)

Although there is a pretense of universality in fairy tales, these elders who set the standards by which society is ruled are almost always European males. Individuals may change, but the situations in which the male is dominant and the female is required to be subservient and beautiful in order to gain love remain static. In sum, fairy tales are ruled by rigid patterns that convey a common patriarchal cultural tradition.

Critics have long worried about the effects of these appealing stories on young readers. For example, many of the Grimms's fairy tales, including their version of Cinderella, have often been declared unsuitable for children by educators due to the extreme violence depicted. In fact, as Maria Tatar points out, after World War II, the Grimms' *Nursery and Household Tales* were believed to have passed on violent values so well that in some cities in post-Nazi Germany all the editions of the tales were banned as "nourishers and reflectors of a cruel, perverse national

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mentality" (185). Most of the violence, both physical and emotional, is inflicted on women; but only recently have feminists shifted the focus of the fairy tale debate onto the effects of gender-coding in fairy tales.[2] According to Marcia Lieberman:

> Millions of women must surely have formed their psycho-sexual self-concepts, and their ideas of what they could and could not accomplish, what sort of behavior would be rewarded, and of the nature of the reward itself, in part from their favorite fairy tales. These stories have been made the repositories of the dreams, hopes, and fantasies of generations of girls. (385)

As Marina Warner points out, fairy tales teach girls passivity and are founded on the social principal of exogamy (22). In her study of reactions to Cinderella among both genders and a variety of age groups, Kay F. Stone supports Warner's statement when she finds that "the message of the Cinderella story that seems most relevant for modern girls and women concerns the rewards one is supposed to receive for being pretty, polite, and passive; the primary reward, of course, is marriage, and marriage to not just anyone but to a 'prince,' someone who can provide the status and the material benefits of the beautiful life" (136). In 1953, Simone de Beauvoir had already complained of the pervasive influence of "Cinderella," "Snow White," and "Sleeping Beauty"—the most widely-read tales—that "everything still encourages the young girl to expect fortune and happiness from some Prince Charming rather than to attempt by herself their difficult and uncertain conquest." (Stone 126)

De Beauvoir makes this statement shortly after an event that was to have an even greater effect on the female imagination than the reading of Perrault's classic tales; namely the premier of Walt Disney's animated *Cinderella*. Starting with the 1939 premier of *Snow White*, the first full-length animated film, the Disney versions of fairy tales succeeded in "forcing everyone to share the same formative dreams" (Schickel 18) and visualize them in the same way. Now Disney's filmic image so dominates the viewer, that it is difficult to imagine Cinderella any other way for it is nearly impossible to escape the image provided to us by the Disney film and the later development of its many product tie-ins, such as dolls, watches, and books. According to Schickel, by the time of Disney's death in 1966 over 240,000,000 people worldwide had seen a Disney movie and 800,000,000 had read an accompanying book or

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magazine (19). One can only guess at the number of viewers that have swelled these figures with the increased popularity of home video. These Disney films are still so popular today that one often has a hard time finding available copies at video stores and libraries.

II. Parodic Inversions

Linda Hutcheon theorizes that in "the visual arts, parody can manifest itself in relation to either particular works or general iconic conventions" (12). Torres does both, and thus an integral part of the Hispanic Cinderella makeover involves not only an inversion of the values taught in the particular Perrault tale, but also a parodic visual dialogue with Disney's *Cinderella* and the general aesthetic techniques of the film fairy tale genre. Torres mimics Disney's characteristic style in order to question its intent. *Celestial Clockwork's* villainess Celeste reminds Ana that within the established order it is absurd for our downtrodden heroine to audition for *La Cenerentola*: "Cinderella has to be blond. Grimm, Walt Disney, Nordic stuff, the dominant iconography." (All quotes from the English subtitles). Disney did establish an iconography that has produced indelibly inscribed memories, and that through its pervasive use has elicited pre-programmed responses in the audience. Ariel Dorfmann has studied the particular use of Disney films in the cultural domination of Latin Americans by the United States. He warns:

> Our young ones are at this moment assimilating fiction which, under its pert and smiling guise, turns them into competitors, teaches them to see domination as the only alternative to subjection. They are learning sex roles; perverse and deformed visions of history; how to grow up, adapt, and succeed in the world as it presently is. They are learning not to ask questions. (206)

The danger is particularly serious for females since goodness and evil are associated with certain physical features in women. As Elizabeth Bell points out,

> The animation of race and ethnicity was unproblematic in the early Disney shop. Animated heroines were individuated in fair-skinned, fair-eyed, anglo-saxon features of eurocentric loveliness, both conforming to and perfecting Hollywood's beauty boundaries. The markers of class, however, are covertly embodied in the metaphors

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> of classical dance. Royal lineage and bearing are personified in the erect, ceremonial carriage of ballet and manifested not only in the dance sequences, but in the heroine's graceful solitude and poised interactions with others. (110-111)

Torres's Celeste is right; within the traditional framework, Cinderella must be blond and blue-eyed and have very soft features in order to be instantly recognized as the good character.[3] Villainesses, on the other hand must be brunette. They, however, are also beautiful, but in a very different manner. Disney followed another strict aesthetic code in drawing these sources of terror. The bad girls have rather sharp features, with lips that are slightly too sensual; very thin, curved eye brows; and deep, overly made-up, slanted, sunken eyes. Disney modeled these evil women on the *femme fatale* of the Hollywood classic film, with her overt sexuality and clinging black dresses. As Bell points out they are also more threatening to young audiences because as the only female characters in Disney films to be rendered in extreme close-ups that fill up the entire screen, they catch the viewer's gaze directly. The *femme fatale's* outstanding feature, according to Mary Ann Doane, is "the fact that she never really is what she seems to be. She harbors a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable" (Bell 115). The same is true of animated *femme fatales,* such as Cinderella's stepmother, portrayed by Disney.[4]

Except for her bleached-blond hair, Celeste conforms very well to this aesthetic mold established through Disney's portrayal of Snow White's and Cinderella's almost identical evil stepmothers, more through Celeste's own creative use of wardrobe and makeup than through the actress Arielle Dombasle's natural features. The character is a Madonna-like performance artist. Her body is her canvas, and she has chosen to be an evil seductress since according to the traditional patterns only the bad women are allowed to be active, and Celeste is determined to leave her mark on the world. In a series of direct comic allusions, when Celeste is being particularly evil, Torres inserts animation to signal her wink at the fairy tale cartoon tradition. Thus, moments before Celeste tries to castrate Ana symbolically by cutting her hair, animated explosions appear behind the evil one's head, just as in a later sequence flames shoot out of her eyes in a way frightfully reminiscent of Snow White's evil stepmother.

Part of the pleasure of the traditional fairy tale, however, comes from inflicting a cruel punishment on the villainess. Thus in the traditional literary versions, Snow White's stepmother is forced to dance to her death

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wearing red hot shoes while birds peck out the eyes of Cinderella's stepsisters.[5] Both hideous acts of vengeance against female characters serve as entertainment at the princesses' weddings. As Bell summarizes, Disney's fairy tale films end similarly with two events, "the collective and unified efforts of all other characters in the films, and the upheaval of natural forces—rock slides, ocean storms, and cliff precipices. Together they reestablish the control and stability of the cultural and natural order in the destruction of the transgressive feminine." (118)

In contrast, no females were harmed in Torres's feminist fairy tale; even Celeste is treated with a certain amount of sympathy. After all, the plots she put in motion, the "mecánica Celeste" of the title, eventually bring everyone happiness. In the end, after failing to seduce Ana's lover, Celeste rides off into the sunset in search of fame in America. Thus, while the touches of animation serve as light-hearted reminders of an obvious intertext, there are major revisions to the fairy tale film canon. Hutcheon stresses that "Parody is, in another formulation, repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6). Torres highlights her inversions of Perrault's and Disney's values and aesthetics since now the bad girl is blond and all the good, struggling Hispanic women are brunettes who move to the rhythm of salsa, not classical music. In fact, conforming to the stereotypes of beauty nearly destroys Ana's dream when she appears at the open auditions for *La Cenerentola* wearing a blond wig after having been told that as a brunette she would instantly be rejected. Meanwhile, Italo so loathes Celeste that he has given strict orders that she be excluded from the set. He doesn't, however, give Celeste's name to the receptionist who consequently translates his loathing of one individual into a rejection of all Venezuelan blondes. Ana is told to leave the auditions. Rather than reacting with the passivity displayed by Perrault's and Disney's Cinderellas, she rushes onto the stage long enough to mesmerize Italo with her voice before she is chased off by his assistants, thus reversing the direction of Cinderella's flight from the ball while still maintaining the element of suspense created when the prince must then search for her.

But Torres does not reverse all of Disney's filmic conventions. Although *Celestial Clockwork* contains serious messages (as do fairy tales), it remains a romantic comedy. We are assured of a happy ending. Creating a film that expressed joy at the same time that it exposed injustices was a key element of Torres's project. During a promotional tour of the U.S., Torres explained to a reporter from *La Prensa de San Antonio*: "In

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my artistic expression, I am very pro Latin American." Yet she wants a new international image for Latin American film: "There's already Latin films that are about misery because we are a continent with many problems, but we also have a lot of joy. We're able to be happy in spite of our sadness." Many of the scenes in *Celestial Clockwork* return us to the joyful, reassuring scenes in Disney films, but with a parodic twist. The musical sequences in which Ana sings and daydreams as she scrubs the stairs of other people's houses echo and mirror scenes from the Disney musicals. Richard Schickel in *The Disney Version* points out that the use of cute (or sometimes excessively grumpy), wee creatures (*Bambi's* Thumper, *Pinocchio's* Jiminy Cricket), "showed Disney and his people a convenient way to brighten and lighten any story they feared might grow too serious or unpleasant for audiences" (228). *Celestial Clockwork* is likewise populated by funny, cute characters who are such caricatures that they seem like cartoons. Disney's Cinderella is helped by the anthropomorphized singing mice who cheer her and together even sew her a new ballgown. Ana's friendly roommates, the owner, and the waiter at her local café, as well as an overly lachrymose boxer, all serve this function. Moreover, the comparison between Gus—Cinderella's chubby, country bumpkin mouse—and Armand—*Celestial Clockwork's* eternally hopeful, chubby, provincial, clairvoyant gay waiter who marries Ana to prevent her deportation—is inevitable. Torres even introduces him with his own partially-animated musical number. As in the Disney version, the pair eventually help each other. Disney's absent-minded, eccentric fairy godmother is here replaced by Alcanie, the psychotherapist who gives Ana the white room with a view of Paris (the Oz of these Latin American hopefuls) she so desired, and sends her off to meet Italo Medici for the first time—not at a ball in a sparkling white gown, but at a salsa party wearing a tailored white pant suit.

In a film about an aspiring opera singer, the music is of course also central to the meaning. The film for which Ana wants to audition is, tellingly, Rossini's *La Cenerontola*. The piece Ana sings as she rushes onto the stage at the auditions is the song that la Cenerentola repeats throughout the entire opera: "Una volta c'era un re,/ Che a star solo,/ Che a star solo s'annoio." The lyrics go on to tell the story of a prince who must choose a wife, but instead of looking for wealth and beauty in his future consort, he looks for kindness and goodness.[6] This is also the lure of Torres's heroine, and the traits that make the audience wish her success. Although Disney's Cinderella is also kind, the passivity she exhibits

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regarding her own fate would be anathema to both Rossini's and Torres's Cinderellas, both of whom are strong, determined women who fight aggressively, with their voices, for justice and a fair competitive opportunity.

III. A New Happy Ending

In a series of lectures at the British Film Institute entitled *Cinema and the Realms of Enchantment*, Marina Warner discussed the success of many films in translating into screen vocabulary the basic tenets of fairy tales, starting with the early works of Georges Méliès at the turn of the century when cinema was still in its infancy. In speaking of film she broadens the definition of the fairy tale, "But the never-never land, bright as sweet wrappers and crowned with towers or castles, long ago and far away, does not only define the territory of fairy tale. The circumstances of telling, and the function of holding out hope, are two much more suggestive and reliable ways to distinguish the genre" (27-28). Torres preserves the function of holding out hope as she radically redefines what constitutes a happy ending. An important shift takes place first of all through Torres's point of view as the director, principal writer, and as a woman. Warner points out that:

> We receive the story of Cinderella as hers, but in doing this we collapse the narrative voice into that of the heroine and consequently overlook that someone is telling Cinderella's story for her; or, indeed, given the circle of listeners around the storyteller or the audience in the cinema, telling it to her. The tale doesn't record the protagonist's own experience. Rather a certain vision or viewpoint is projected through the tale to the audience, and a lesson is conveyed through the sympathy with the protagonist that the teller shows. (20)

The well-known tellers up to now have been mostly male.

In recent times a number of women artists have begun to retell Cinderella's story from the viewpoint of a female narrator. The poet Ann Sexton, for example, reveals the impossibility of a life like Cinderella's for the many girls who long for a prince to come and save them while they wait passively. In this 1971 poem, Sexton questions the promise of a happy ending.

> Cinderella and the prince
> lived, they say, happily ever after,

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like two dolls in a museum case
never bothered by diapers and dust,
never arguing over the timing of an egg,
never telling the same story twice,
never getting a middle-aged spread,
their darling smiles pasted on for eternity,
Regular Bobbsey Twins.
That story. (Stone 137)

While many like Sexton focused on highlighting the negative effects on female readers of these tales, more recently female authors such as Angela Carter have restored positive, powerful female characters to the fairy tale canon in works such as the anthology *The Old Wives's Fairy Tale Book*, and in her original collection of feminist re-writings of fairy tales, *The Bloody Chamber*.

Fina Torres joins this group of creative women in giving the Cinderella tale a new liberating narrative from the female artist's point of view as she directs her own original story. The film begins where a fairy tale usually ends, with a wedding; but here the protagonist flees from the church, rides a pale-green taxi home to retrieve her suitcase and her beloved Maria Callas poster, and hours later arrives in Paris still in a rumpled wedding gown, much like the one Disney drew for Cinderella. This Cinderella has a boyish, yet stylish new haircut and wears mainly sneakers and jeans. Plus, she violently rejects the institution of marriage.

One major thematic difference is the importance placed on Cinderella's new friends in Paris. Seldom, if ever, is sincere female friendship portrayed in fairy tales, or until recently, on film. Women are instead usually involved in destroying each other in competition over the same male. Here the women unite, not only to help Ana reach her career goals (they are the ones who provide her with a home and find her the music teacher), but also to destroy the image that competition among females provides the best entertainment. Alcanie eventually falls in love with Ana and, as a combination mother/lover, protects her from the immigration police while offering her a nurturing home environment. Keeping within the paradigms of the Cinderella plot, the relationship between Ana and Alcanie is foreshadowed at the beginning of the film when Alcanie loses a shoe as she runs past Ana. The gender barriers break down, Alcanie will be Ana's princess, Prince, and fairy godmother all rolled into one character.

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The transformation of Disney's amorphous, old fairy godmother into Alcanie, Ana's psychotherapist lesbian lover is yet another of Torres's feminist statements. As we have already seen, for Disney, middle-aged beauty with its overtones of sexuality and authority was a threatening force to be destroyed. The good female characters drawn by the Disney studios are either sexless adolescents, or pear-shaped, post-menopausal dimwits who represent nurturing, self-sacrificing substitute mothers. While Alcanie's absent-mindedness and Ana's rather sex-less outward appearance partially link both characters to their Disney ancestors, with her creation of this loving couple, Torres breaks Disney's cultural codes as she opens up a new space for female sexual subjectivity.[7]

The film has a circular structure in that it also ends with a wedding. The now lesbian Cinderella is marrying her dear gay friend Armand, which resolves her problems with immigration, at the same time thats it will make his parents happy. However, the wedding is interrupted by the arrival of both Alcanie, who, in spite of Celeste's interference will never abandon her friend, and Italo Medici—who with the help of Toutou, el Santero Palero Bantu witch doctor friend of Ana's—has finally found his Cinderella. The scratchy recording of Shubert's *Ave Maria* that was playing in the church is immediately replaced by Ana as la Cenerentola while Italo and Alcanie beam at her happily from the back of the theatre.

IV. Epilogue

Ana's ultimate triumph in the European opera world is much more than a personal feat, for when Ana had been rejected and threatened at the public auditions, it was mainly for being Venezuelan. Italo's hatred of Celeste had lead to his French receptionist's conclusion that all Venezuelan women would be equally bad. Can we imagine she would exclude all French blondes because Italo hated one? The feminist vision of Torres's tale is coupled with the notion that all the Latin Americans Ana befriends in Paris are in their own ways Cinderellas (even Celeste) if they ever attain success in the exclusive Eurocentric world of the arts. The film is a condemnation of the wave of racism that swept through Europe in the closing decade of the twentieth century. During her 1996 trip to the United States to promote the film, Torres spoke against the current xenophobia.

> Yo considero todo esto que está sucediendo como un retroceso violento, yo pienso que es gravísimo. Y yo, como artista, tengo que

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> decir con mi pequeña voz algo al respecto…La apertura y mezcla de culturas es muy importante para la evolución de la humanidad; eso enriquece a cualquier sociedad. Los marginados tienen derecho a ser felices y eso es lo que quería decir en la película, pero en un tono muy ligero. (Infante 1)

All the main characters in the film are in some way victims of prejudice. Armand is mocked because he is from the North of France, and Ana's rejection at the auditions when the receptionist yells "no blond Venezuelans" echoes the Slavic music teacher's outrage at the thought of one of his pupils singing Rossini. He yells at Ana, "No! No Italians here. Music is serious business!" and he has her sing Shubert instead. Despite the disparity of wealth, Toutou even considers Italo "a migrant worker like me." The ones who suffer the most discrimination are, of course, the Latin Americans whose only career options seem to be as cleaning ladies or nannies, and who are actively pursued by the police.

As has been noted repeatedly in the U.S. Hispanic press, Torres's script is fairly autobiographical. In 1972, after having worked as a magazine photographer, Torres left her native Caracas for the Institute de Hautes Études Cinematographiques in Paris, which at the time, as in previous decades, was the Mecca of the artistic and intellectual world for many of Latin America's aspiring young artists. Torres felt that her move to Paris was her only chance of success since it was impossible to study filmmaking in Venezuela. When she did try to return to Venezuela, there was no work so that she was forced to return to France in order to continue working in film. Yet, after twenty years in France, Torres continues to see herself as a Latin American and accordingly the U.S. Hispanic press has fully embraced *Celestial Clockwork* as a film that "mantiene un sabor latino inconfundible" (Méndez). Here the French elements of the film, and of Torres herself, are muted to instead focus on the fact that the film retells a version of the lives of so many immigrants who left their own homes for foreign lands in search of opportunities. This theme is fully brought out in the lyrics of the title song that is sung to a Latin beat.

> Dejé mi tierra querida
> por venirles a cantar.
> Y resulta que he encontrado,
> envidias y mala fe,
> pero también encontré

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la gente que me ha ayudado.
Resultaron como hermanos
que me empujaron adelante.

When the Hispanic press lists the honors won by the film, they do mention that it won the National Prize for best Venezuelan film.[8]

As if to highlight the film's theme of the exclusion of the Latin American artist from the Anglo-European art world, the mainstream reviewers of *Celestial Clockwork* in the United States have ignored the very obvious fact that this is a Hispanic film, and have instead labeled this film by a Hispanic director, with mostly Hispanic protagonists, with most of the dialogue in Spanish, and the title taken from a salsa number, a "French film" (it is a French, Portuguese, Spanish, Belgian, Venezuelan co-production). The same was true of Torres's first film *Oriana* which only contains five minutes of dialogue in French and is set in Venezuela. Stanley Kauffmann, (who, ignorant of Latin American culture, assumes that because of his dark skin and magical skills Toutuou is African) writes, "It's about youth, sex, singing and (therefore?) Paris" (24). Apparently for Kauffmann Latin Americans have yet to discover sex, or their own voices. Lisa Henricksson labels *Celestial Clockwork* a "Cheerful French Cinderella story…We know where all this is leading, but Fina Torres's exuberant direction gives new juice to the old tale." (28)

Although the Hispanic artist seems not to have found her prince (or princess) among many critics, Italo Medici does find his ideal Cinderella in and from an unexpected place. Italo explained on the radio that: "Cinderella has always taken her time. Her story was first told in China, and her slipper took centuries to reach us. So let's give her the time to reach me. I want her goodness to be a sign of her intelligence. She has to be lively and ardent. Her voice full-bodied and deep. And in her eyes, a stalwart soul." Just as he finishes saying this, Ana's Maria Callas poster falls off the wall, symbolically opening up a new space for a Cinderella who also happens to be a Spanish-speaking, lesbian brunette.

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NOTES

[1] Zipes also makes a clear distinction between the terms "fairy" and "folk" tales. "The folk tale is part of a 'pre-capitalist people's oral tradition' which expresses their wishes to attain better living conditions through a depiction of their struggles and contradictions. The term fairy tale is of 'bourgeois coinage' and indicates the advent of a new literary form which appropriates elements of folklore to address and criticize the aspirations and needs of an emerging bourgeois audience" (27). Also helpful on this topic is Zipes's *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983).

[2] The greatest flaw in Bettelheim's work is that he denies the role gender plays in interpreting fairy tales. Thus, Bettelheim reads "Cinderella" as a tale that speaks equally to boys and girls since he considers that it deals exclusively with sibling rivalry. For Bettelheim's interpretation of "Cinderella," along with a detailed study of the historical evolution of the tale, see pages 236-276.

[3] Snow White is the exception to the blond rule due to the extreme whiteness of her skin: if she were also blond she would be invisible on the screen. We should also note that the Disney Studios have responded to audience demand in recent years producing a mixed race, live action version of *Cinderella*, conceived of and co-produced by Whitney Houston, who plays the fairy god-mother, and starring Brandy.

[4] Disney's *Snow White* was originally censored because the evil step-mother/witch was too frightening to children precisely because of this technique of having her utter violent threats while shown in a close-up so extreme that her face takes up the entire large movie screen from which she glares directly at the viewer. In contrast, the heroine's close-ups are taken from a much greater distance and her ladylike sense of modesty forbids her from engaging the spectator's gaze directly. Disney's solution to the censor's objections was not to modify the character, but rather to soften the impact by adding more musical numbers involving the dwarves and dancing, singing animals.

[5] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have an interesting feminist analysis of the Queen dancing to her death in the red hot shoes in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Imagination*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

[6] The libretto for *La Cenerentola, ossia La bontá in trionfo* was written by Giacomo Ferreti who in turn had borrowed certain elements from the libretto by Charles-Guillaume Etienne for Niccolò Isouard's *Cendrillon.* In both operas Cinderella initially proves her goodness by being kind to a beggar who is actually the Prince's tutor in disguise.

[7] The issue of magic does come up regarding the love between Ana and Alcanie for the catalyst that sets in motion the affair is a potion concocted by

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Toutou, the witchdoctor. The magic, however, is not to be taken too seriously. Alcanie all but confesses to Toutou that she is attracted to someone of her same sex, and before anyone brewed a potion, when Ana first hugs Alcanie, she confesses to "a strange feeling." In addition to her professional concerns, her lesbian sexuality might help explain why Ana is so violently opposed to marriage and to returning to her family in Venezuela. The validity of Toutou's magic is also questioned more than once. Celeste asks him for the love potion to lure Alcanie away from Ana, but its effects are only temporary while we expect Ana and Alcanie to live happily ever after. Furthermore, when in desperation Italo asks Toutou to help him find his elusive Cinderella, it is clear that he cannot find missing people. He can lead Italo to Ana only because her name is written on the tape Italo has brought.

[8] There was some controversy in Venezuela over the choice of a Spanish actress, Ariadna Gil, to play the lead role. Torres has responded rather angrily to these complaints, "A mi me da risa, porque eso es tan primitivo, tan provincial, tan realmente atrasado, con un nacionalismo tan barato…" (Infante). She goes on to point out that no one objects to Meryl Streep or Harvey Keitel playing foreigners. Aside from issues of nationalism and political correctness, one must consider the forces of marketing. In order to sell her film Torres needed someone who was already well-known and Gil was still basking in the success and recognition she had garnered in her role as the lesbian sister in *Belle Epoque*. In her most recent film, *Woman on Top*, Torres has again cast a Spanish actress in the lead role. I must agree with Torres that Penelope Cruz does have that special mix of sensuality and innocence that the role requires, but she is also well-known because of her roles in Almodóvar films. It would be especially hard for a relatively unknown director to achieve box office success without a recognizable star.

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